WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A system for distributing a debt in a content providing service, the system being communicably connected to content storage means in which one or more digital contents are stored and also communicably connected to additional-information storage means in which additional information offered for being provided by one or more additional-information providers is stored, the system having a capability of distributing a debt such that when additional information is transmitted to an user associated with a digital content , part or all of a debt imposed upon the user as a result of transmission of the digital content to the user is distributed to the additional-information provider of the additional information,

wherein the digital content and the additional information are selected from the content storage means and the additional-information storage means in accordance with a selection criterion, in terms of the debt distribution, designated by the user, and part or all of the debt imposed upon the user is distributed to the additional-information provider in accordance with the selection result.

2.   A billing system for use in a content providing service, the system being communicably connected to content storage means in which one or more digital contents are stored and also communicably connected to additional-information storage means in which additional information offered for being provided by one or more additional-information providers is stored, the system having a capability of distributing a payment value such that when additional information is transmitted to an user associated with a digital content , part or all of the payment value charged to the user as a result of transmission of the digital content to the user is distributed to the additional-information provider of the additional information, the system comprising:

distribution-manner information storage means for storing distribution-manner information indicating a manner of distributing the payment value, designated by the user;

content selection means for selecting a digital content from the digital contents stored in the content storage means;

additional-information selection means for selecting additional information from the additional information stored in the additional-information storage means;

additional-information linkage means for making a link between the digital content selected by the content selection means and the additional information selected by the additional-information selection means;

content transmission means for transmitting the digital content linked to the additional information to the user; and

payment value distribution means for distributing part or all of the payment value charged to the user to the additional-information provider, in accordance with the selection result made by the content selection means and in accordance with the selection result made by the additional-information selection means,

wherein one or both of the content selection means and the additional-information selection means make a selection in accordance with the distribution-manner information stored in the distribution-manner information storage means and in accordance with a selection result made by the other one of the content selection means and the additional-information selection means.

3. A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 2, wherein

the content storage means stores the digital content such that the digital content is related to digital-content-fee information indicating a fee for the digital content to be paid by the user,

the additional-information storage means stores the additional information such that the additional information is related to discount value information indicating a discount value that will be reduced from the payment value when the additional information is linked to the digital content,

wherein one or both of the content selection means and the additional-information selection means make a selection such that the sum of the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information or the discount value information corresponding to a selection result made by the other one of the content selection means and the additional-information selection means in accordance with the distribution-manner information stored in the distribution-manner information storage means and the fee calculated on the basis of the discount value information or the digital-content-fee information corresponding to a selection result made by the user meets a condition specified by the user.

4. A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 3, wherein

the distribution-manner information is information indicating a maximum value in terms of the payment value designated by the user, and

wherein the content selection means selects the digital content such that the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content to be selected by the content selection means does not become greater than the sum of the maximum value indicated by the distribution-manner information and the discount value

calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information selected by the additional-information selection means.

5.   A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 3, wherein

the distribution-manner information is information indicating a maximum value in terms of the payment value designated by the user, and

wherein the additional-information selection means selects the additional information such that the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content selected by the content selection means does not become greater than the sum of the maximum value indicated by the distribution-manner information and the discount value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information to be selected by the additional-information selection means.

6.   A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 4 or 5, further comprising

fee calculation means for calculating the fee on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content selected by the content selection means; and

discount value calculation means for calculating the discount value on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information selected by the additional-information selection means,

wherein the content selection means selects the digital content such that the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content to be selected by the content selection means does not become greater than the sum of the maximum value indicated by the distribution-manner information and the discount value calculated by the discount value calculation means, and

the additional-information selection means selects the additional information such that the fee calculated by the fee calculation means does not exceed the sum of the maximum value indicated by the distribution-manner information and the discount value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information to be selected by the additional-information selection means.

7.   A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to one of Claims 3 to 6, wherein

the distribution-manner information is information indicating a selection condition in terms of the additional information designated by the user,

the additional-information selection means selects additional information that meets the selection condition indicated by the distribution-manner information, and

the fee distribution means determines the payment value to be paid by the user by subtracting the discount value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information selected by the additional-information selection means from the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content selected by the digital content selection means.

8.　A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to one of Claims 3 to 7, wherein

the distribution-manner information is information indicating a digital content selection condition specified by the user,

the content selection means selects a digital content that meets the selection condition indicated by the distribution-manner information, and

the fee distribution means determines the payment value to be paid by the user by subtracting the discount value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information selected by the additional-information selection means from the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content selected by the digital content selection means.

9.　A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to one of Claims 2 to 8, further comprising

user information storage means for storing user information associated with a user, and

content layout means for determining an output layout of the digital content linked to the additional information, in accordance with the user information stored in the user information storage means, and laying out the digital content in accordance with the determined output layout,

wherein the content distribution means transmits a digital content laid out by the layout means to the user.

10.　A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to one of Claims 2 to 9, further comprising distribution-result providing means for providing a distribution result made by the fee distribution means to the user.

11.   A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 10, further comprising

modify command input means for inputting a modify command to modify the distribution-manner information in response to the distribution result provided by the distribution-result providing means; and

distribution information modifying means for modifying the distribution-manner information stored in the distribution-manner information storage means in accordance with the modify command inputted via the modify command input means.

12.   A method of distributing a debt for use in a content distribution service such that when additional information offered for being provided by an additional-information provider is transmitted to a user associated with a digital content, part or all of a debt imposed upon the user as a result of transmission of the digital content to the user is distributed to the additional-information provider, the method comprising the steps of:

selecting a digital content and additional information from digital contents and additional information respectively stored in content storage means and additional-information storage means in accordance with a selection criterion, in terms of the debt distribution, designated by the user; and

distributing part or all of the debt imposed upon the user to the additional-information provider in accordance with the selection result.

13.   A computer-readable storage medium in which is stored a debt distribution program for controlling a computer to execute a process of distributing a debt such that when additional information offered for being provided by an additional-information provider is transmitted to a user associated with a digital content , part or all of a debt imposed upon the user as a result of transmission of the digital content to the user is distributed to the additional-information provider, the process comprising the steps of:

selecting a digital content and additional information from digital contents and additional information respectively stored in content storage means and additional-information storage means in accordance with a selection criterion, in terms of the debt distribution, designated by the user; and

distributing part or all of the debt imposed upon the user to the additional-information provider in accordance with the selection result.